



Department of Justice

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Northern District of New York**

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10 INDICTED IN CENTRAL NEW YORK ISYNTHETIC MARIJUANA CONSPIRACY

Syracuse, NY- United States Attorney Richard S. Hartunian announced the indictment of ten (10) individuals in connection with a large synthetic marijuana distribution organization in Central New York. Those arrested in the synthetic marijuana distribution conspiracy this morning include the following:

ABDALQADER MANSOUR, age 44, Syracuse, New York;
RASHEED MANSOUR, age 23, Camillus, New York;
JOE AREF, age 28, Nederland, Texas;
ARAFAT KHOUDOUR, age 29, Beaumont, Texas;
ALI BEDWAN, age 25, Port Arthur, Texas;
ABED ZAHRAN, age 55, North Syracuse, New York;
AMJAD MANSOUR, age 25, Syracuse, New York; and
ZIAD MANSOUR, age 33, Camillus, New York.

All of these individuals have been indicted by a federal grand jury with conspiring to possess with the intent to distribute and distributing synthetic marijuana. If convicted, the defendants face up to a twenty (20) years imprisonment, up to a \$1 million fine, and at least three (3) years of supervised release following any period of incarceration.¹ Arraignments are scheduled in U.S. District Court in Syracuse for 1:30 p.m. today before Magistrate Judge David E. Peebles.

These prosecutions resulted from an investigation undertaken in the fall of 2012 by the Syracuse Resident Office of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Onondaga County Sheriff's Office (OCSO), the Syracuse Police Department (SPD), the New York State Police (NYSP), the United States Marshals Service, and the U.S. Attorney's Office.

The investigation, which included wiretaps on one of the defendant's telephones, revealed that this synthetic marijuana trafficking organization was responsible for the manufacture and distribution of approximately 100 to 200 pounds of synthetic marijuana per month. The synthetic marijuana was manufactured in clandestine locations in and around Syracuse by members of the conspiracy. The defendants utilized chemicals such as UR-144 (a Schedule I controlled substance), which they imported from China and elsewhere; they sprayed the chemicals on leafy plant material, added flavoring, and then placed the synthetic marijuana

¹ The charge announced today is merely an allegation and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.

product in packages labeled “Scooby Snax,” “WTF,” “Blue Caution,” and other names. The packages were then distributed to local convenience stores, as well as shipped to co-conspirators in Texas, Ohio, and South Carolina for distribution to customers.

Search warrants were executed in Texas and at the following locations this morning:

**202 Van Rensselaer Street, Apartment #1, Syracuse, NY,
1500 Elm Circle, Apartment #7, Camillus, NY,
430 Spencer Street, Storage Unit D-151, Syracuse, NY,
104 Lorian Drive, Syracuse, NY,
344 North Salina Street, Syracuse, NY,
1805 S. Geddes Street, Syracuse, NY,
300 Otisco Street, Syracuse, NY,
1504 South Avenue, Syracuse, NY,
1000 Butternut Street, Syracuse, NY,
1223 Butternut Street, Syracuse, NY,
500 Oakwood Avenue, Syracuse, NY,
1215 Lodi Street, Syracuse, NY,
359 S. Salina Street, Syracuse, NY,
2002 E. Fayette Street, Syracuse, NY, and
801 Butternut Street, Syracuse, NY.**

To date, the following items have been recovered: An AR-15 rifle; Ruger handgun, approximately 10 kilograms of synthetic chemicals, several thousand packets of prepackaged synthetic marijuana; approximately \$75,000 in U.S. currency; two vehicles; and equipment used to manufacture the synthetic marijuana.

U.S. Attorney Richard S. Hartunian stated, “This case is an example of the challenges faced by law enforcement in combatting the ever changing methods utilized by drug dealers to create synthetic drugs. Today’s arrests demonstrate that our dedicated local, state and federal law enforcement agencies are up to this task. We will continue to aggressively investigate and prosecute those who seek to profit from the sale of these illegal poisons to the youth of our community.”

Drug Enforcement Administration, Special Agent in Charge of the New York Division Brian R. Crowell said, “Synthetic marijuana is nothing more than poison sprayed on poison,” stated DEA Special Agent in Charge Brian R. Crowell. “This organization was manufacturing and distributing 100 to 200 pounds of synthetic marijuana per month. They packaged the synthetic marijuana in distribution bags labeled ‘Scooby Snax,’ to target our youth. Synthetic drugs are poison. Over the past two years, there were 7,452 exposures of synthetic marijuana reported to the American Association of Poison Control Centers. Kids need to stay away from this and these traffickers have our undivided attention.” SAC Crowell would like to commend the DEA Syracuse Resident Office, the Onondaga County Sheriff’s Office, the Syracuse Police Department, the New York State Police, the United States Marshals Service, the Onondaga District Attorney’s Office, the New York Attorney General’s Office, the Camillus Police Department, and the U.S. Attorney’s Office, Northern District of New York.

Further questions or inquiries may be directed to Assistant United States Attorney Carla Freedman, the prosecutor handling the case, at (315) 448-0672.

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